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# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

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## THE EMERGENT THEORY OF MIND

MY purpose in this article is to discuss the bearing of the new theories of mind upon the old and tantalizing mind-body problem. Recent writers do not seem to appreciate how the problem has been shifted, nor how completely the old classical solutions have been superseded. I think that in the future we shall not continue to hear much about interactionism, parallelism, epiphenomenalism, double-aspectism, *etc.*, except as interesting historical theories. It remains, however, to inquire much more carefully and thoroughly than I can in this brief paper, whether the emergent theory will be adequate to cover the facts.

It is my belief that more progress has been made in the past fifteen years in coming to an understanding of the real nature of mind than in all the centuries since Aristotle. We are, indeed, coming back somewhat to his view, which was that the mind is the use, perfection, entelechy of the body. We are accustomed to hear about the points of difference between the Neo-Realists, the Pragmatists, the Freudians, and the Behaviorists, but the points of agreement are more significant. These schools pretty well agree in regarding mind as adaptive behavior, as specific response, as selective control; more exactly, as that integration of vital processes which enables an organism to respond as a unit to a new situation in such a way as to conserve and enhance its well-being. Perhaps the Freudians and some of the Pragmatists will hardly accept this definition without qualification, the qualification being that the mind is this and something more—something *sui generis*, something new and distinctive, something unique and creative. With this qualification I should heartily agree, if it is interpreted pluralistically and not dualistically. If, however, we accept this definition of mind as a working basis, with or without the above qualification, it is interesting to see how it transforms and illumines the old and vexatious mind-body problem, which in times past has come so near driving some of us crazy.

In defining the mind as that organization of vital processes which makes adaptive behavior possible, it is mind that I am speaking of and not consciousness. Endless confusion and misunderstanding would have been avoided, if psychologists and philosophers had

steadfastly used the word "mind" to denote this kind of behavior, this sum of capacities, and not the word "consciousness." It was most unfortunate that in the last decades of the last century, when suspicion began to attach to the words "soul" and "mind," psychologists fixed upon the word "consciousness" to stand for the psychical life in general. James tried to put a stop to this in his celebrated essay but he did not seem to understand clearly the relation between consciousness and mind. In recent years this relation is becoming clear.<sup>1</sup> I shall refer presently to consciousness in its relation to the body, but at present I am speaking not of consciousness but of mind.

It is, therefore, with a decided feeling of relief or even of emancipation that we discover that the new conception of mind sets us free from all the old so-called "solutions" of the mind-body problem, from interactionism, from parallelism, from epiphenomenalism, from the double-aspect theory, from subjectivism, and from materialism. I believe these "isms" have been superseded. So also probably has the expression theory, the transmission theory, and the instrument theory. The brain is not the instrument of the mind. Rather the brain is the instrument by means of which nature achieves the mind. Mind and body do not interact, as interactionism and dualism teach. The mind is not a form of the mechanical interplay of atoms, as materialism teaches. The body is not a phenomenon or appearance or externalization of mind, as idealism teaches. Mind and body are not parallel as psychophysical parallelism teaches. Neither are they two sides or aspects of the same reality, as the double-aspect theory teaches. You can not represent the relation of mind and body by any system of parallel lines, whether merely parallel, interconnected, or correlated with a third line, nor by two lines one of which is the shadow of the other. Mind is something which the body achieves, or which nature achieves by means of the body. If you must have a diagram, the ladder will be better than the parallel bars. When nature achieves the molecule, the atom ceases to be the thing of primary importance, worth, or even of reality. When nature achieves the cell, the molecule is eclipsed. When the organism is achieved, the cell is eclipsed. When mind is achieved, the body is eclipsed. Mind is a new reality, gained, achieved, won. It is, in Aristotelian phrase, the form of the body.

<sup>1</sup> Witness the rather strong language used by Bertrand Russell in his book, *The Analysis of Mind*, p. 40. "It is therefore natural to suppose that, whatever may be the correct definition of 'consciousness,' 'consciousness' is not the essence of life or mind. In the following lectures, accordingly, this term will disappear until we have dealt with words, when it will reëmerge as mainly a trivial and unimportant outcome of linguistic habits."

Evidently, if we want a name for this new notion of the relation of mind to body, we may call it the emergent theory.<sup>2</sup> Mind emerges from the body. The theory of levels has taken the place of parallelism, interactionism, and the double-aspect view. It is hard to say which of these theories was the most unsatisfactory and the escape from them is wholesome. All the dualistic theories were unconvincing. There is no magic about the number two. Nature having achieved two, goes on to three and four. The monistic theories were little better, although, if mind be the supreme reality, there is a sense of the word "reality," which admits of a monistic interpretation, a monism of value perhaps. But the pluralistic view of reality is most satisfactory. Mind is real, consciousness is real, body is real, and so are many other things.

But, some reader will say, the mind-body problem can not be disposed of so easily—in this high-handed manner. Mental processes seem to be correlated with bodily processes. With every mental image, perception, *etc.*, some neural process is correlated. Well, from our point of view, they are not correlated and there is no duality about it, nor are they two sides or aspects of the same reality. What happens is that we have a series of vital processes, which, when integrated or organized, exhibit capacities that we call mental or psychical. When they reach the point of attaining to that kind of activity which we call intelligent control, we no longer speak of them as vital or neural processes, but as psychical. We are up on a new level, among new realities, in a new atmosphere, dealing with new things, having their own laws and peculiarities. Mind has emerged from matter. The spiritual has emerged from the physical. After long centuries of misuse the word spirit gains a definite and profitable meaning. It means the level of the psychical as viewed from the standpoint of value.

Thus far, I think, the way is clear and the emergent theory seems to satisfy the conditions. But we are not through with our troubles. The mind-body problem is more difficult than this. There are still two "waves" to be met and, if possible, surmounted. We can not evade the fact of consciousness and consciousness is not the same thing as mind. Behaviorism, as a new method of advancing the science of psychology, is a wholesome discipline, but the psychologist can not ignore the reality known as consciousness,—at any rate the student of philosophy can not. Whatever modern theory of consciousness we adopt, the "cross-section" theory, the "relational" theory, the "independent variable" theory, the "new

<sup>2</sup> S. Alexander, who has made the emergent theory familiar to us, says that Lloyd Morgan and George Henry Lewes had previously used the term. Compare his *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 14.

dimension of reality" theory, the "something adventitious to psychic states" theory, the psychologist has consciousness on his hands, if not in his head, and willy-nilly must do something with it.

I have, of course, no intention of discussing the problem of consciousness here. I am only raising the question whether the emergent theory can be made to cover it, whether it is simply intelligent behavior that emerges from the neural level, or whether consciousness may emerge. If not, then is consciousness something which is parallel with the neural processes, or is it another aspect of the neural processes, or does it interact with them? I am tired of these words and do not believe that any of them apply to the case in hand, although there are greater difficulties here than in the case of mind, as I have been discussing it. Let us say that consciousness is simply the relationship between the mind as perceiving and the thing perceived. The percipient mind is acted upon and responds to the thing or object, and this sort of togetherness is what we mean by consciousness in its simplest form. Awareness is another word for the same thing in the simple form of it here described. The mind-body problem simply does not enter into the matter at all. We are dealing with a relationship between the mind as a real thing and the object as another real thing, but the first term in this relationship, namely, the mind, has emerged from the body; for, when the brain has attained to that degree of integration in which behavior of this kind takes place, that is, adaptive, selective behavior, we no longer call it neural or bodily, but psychical. If, however, anyone should prefer to speak of the organism or the brain as acting in this way, that is, if anyone wishes to consider the brain as the percipient subject, why then, consciousness as before would be the relationship between the percipient organism and the object perceived. In either case consciousness, as a special kind of relation, is something real, something wholly immaterial, something other than and much narrower than the mind, and something related to the body quite otherwise than indicated by any of the old terms, parallelism, interactionism, double-aspect, *etc.*

But the word consciousness, as it is used in everyday speech, usually means something more than mere awareness. It approaches the meaning of self-consciousness. It implies not merely a relation between the percipient subject and the perceived thing, but a relation between the present and the past history of the subject. It implies that the whole situation takes the form of a connected story. But so far as the bearing upon the mind-body problem is concerned, this new richness of the word "consciousness" makes no difference. The relationship which I have explained above still

prevails. Only it is important to remember what different meanings the word "consciousness" actually has, and in its two legitimate meanings to keep it distinguished from the larger term, mind.

Those of us who have had the experience of awaking from the unconsciousness of ether or some other anæsthetic have perhaps had a good illustration of the two kinds of consciousness to which I have referred. There is first a mere awareness of certain noises, perhaps of the nurses' voices, not brought into relation to "myself," or to the total situation. Consciousness thus far is simply the relation between a percipient subject and an object. Gradually, however, the situation dawns. I am here and have been asleep. The voices, myself, the environment, my immediate past, are knit together into a connected story. I have regained my consciousness. The perceived object has been brought into relation, not only with the percipient subject, but with a lot of other things, names and memories. The perceived thing gets a *meaning*, as we say, that is, it takes its place in a familiar group of memory images, making a connected story.<sup>3</sup> We have here merely a more complex form of togetherness, but so far as the nature of consciousness itself is concerned or its connection with the body our conclusions are not changed. What I have said of awareness applies also here.

If now anyone should not be satisfied with this very simple description of consciousness and its relation to the body and should insist that we have in consciousness something more than such a "compresence" as I have described, such for instance as recent writers have called "a new dimension of reality" or "an independent variable," I can not see that it would make any difference so far as my conclusions about the relation of mind and body are concerned. If, however, one begins to speak about consciousness as a creative agent, or an effective factor in the world, why, then one is speaking not of consciousness but of mind. The emergent theory would then hold good.

My only present purpose is to show that in dealing with the mind-body problem consciousness must be considered as just one distinct phase of that total complex thing which we call the mind and dealt with by itself in its relation to the body, and that if the connected story theory of consciousness is correct, it is just a peculiar kind of relation between things and hence comes neither under the emergent theory nor any of the old parallelistic, interaction, or double-aspect theories.

This is the second "wave." A third, if one were to solve the mind-body problem, would have to be met and surmounted.

<sup>3</sup> Comp. the full theory of consciousness given by Bertrand Russell in his *Analysis of Mind*, already referred to, p. 288ff.

If by mind we mean adaptive behavior, intelligent control, specific response *plus* consciousness, then the above-described solution of the mind-body problem may suffice. But mind is a still broader term. It includes the primary biological "interests," which belong to the living organism itself. Now while there is a strong tendency in present-day psychology, sociology, education, *etc.*, to elevate to a position of first importance the conative tendencies, instinctive cravings, non-reflexional elements of experience, the wish, the will, the libido, the power of self-maintenance which belongs to all life, the vital principle, *élan vital*, or whatever it is, nevertheless, in recent discussions about the real nature of mind and consciousness, which have filled this JOURNAL and others, these primary biological impulses have not been sufficiently noticed. Professor Perry, near the conclusion of his chapter on "A Realistic Theory of Mind" in his *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, recognizing the complex character of the mind, says that it embraces three parts. First, a complex acting desideratively or interestedly, characterized by certain biological interests. Second, a nervous system acting as instrument of the above interests. Third, certain contents or parts of the environment, called the mental contents.

It is not the place here to ask why Professor Perry did not add consciousness to these three parts, making four, nor to raise the question whether the analysis would not have been more accurate if he had substituted consciousness as the third and last element in mind in place of the problematical "contents," as I should be inclined to do, thus limiting the mind to a series of interests and activities plus consciousness. This question does not belong here. I am only concerned in calling attention to the fact that the primary biological interests belong to that very complex thing which we call the mind and in asking how this additional factor would bear upon the mind-body problem.

It begins to appear more than ever that the mind-body problem is a kind of pseudo-problem and the traditional "solutions" all quite beside the mark. The relation between the mind and the body may be quite different depending upon whether we are talking about the springs of behavior, namely, the primary biological interests, or about adaptive behavior itself, or about consciousness. Evidently man's original nature, his primitive impulses, his primary biological interests, do not "emerge" from the organization of his vital processes. They *are* the vital processes or a part of them. The fact is, of course, that we are not in position to discuss this problem at all, because we do not know enough about vital processes, the springs of life, to determine their relation to the body. We at once divide into schools. According to M. Bergson, not only does the vital im-

pulse not emerge from the body but the exact reverse is thought to be true. Matter is a kind of emergent from the vital impulse. On the other hand, according to the extreme Behaviorists and the Materialists, life itself and of course all its impulses and interests are the products of material organization. In this sense, I suppose, the primary impulses could be said to emerge from matter, although not from the body; for the body, at any rate the brain, is a kind of instrument of these primary impulses, a means of controlling the environment to their ends. If so, then it would seem that the primary biological interests emerge from matter, and the brain (and hence the mind) emerges from the primary biological interests. At any rate the emergent theory seems to fit in here also better than any of the old parallelistic, interaction, or double-aspect theories.

Mr. Louis Berman, in his book *The Glands Regulating Personality*, speaks of the lowest organs, the vegetative organs, the heart and lungs, stomach and intestines, the kidneys and the liver, and the glands of internal secretion as inventing and elaborating muscle, bone, and brain to carry out their will. Evolution, he says, has been in the direction of a greater perfection of methods of carrying out their will. "Mind, reacting upon its creator, has, in a sense, come to dominate them, because it has become the meeting ground of all the energy-influences seething and bubbling in the organism, and so developed into the organ of handling them as a whole, their Integrating-Executive."<sup>4</sup>

Here we seem to have an answer to the question which American Instrumentalism never made clear. Instrumentalism tells us what the mind is the instrument *for*, but not very confidently what it is the instrument *of*. According to Professor Berman, it is the instrument of the vegetative organs, heart, lungs, *etc.*, for carrying out their will, or the instrument of the "energy-influences seething and bubbling in the organism."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Page 196.

<sup>5</sup> To my mind Professor Berman spoils this excellent description by prefacing it with his theory that consciousness or awareness must be accepted as a fundamental, primal fact, like protoplasm. "Consciousness and protoplasm may be the complementary sides of the same coin." In a somewhat similar way, Dr. Alexander, in his *Space, Time, and Deity*, seems to me to relapse into a kind of double-aspect theory after having given the clearest possible account of the emergent theory. He reiterates throughout his book his excellent theory that the mind emerges from a lower level of complexity which we call vital, but still finds it necessary to teach that "the mental process and the neural process are one and the same existence, not two existences. As mental, it is in my language enjoyed by the experient; as neural it is contemplated by an outsider or may be contemplated in thought by the experient himself." (Vol. II, p. 9.) Similarly Professor Montague, after identifying consciousness with potential energy, existing in space, says that "what we know directly from within as the



Returning, however, to our main inquiry, we are not told by Professor Berman how the energy-influences are related to the body. In other words, nobody knows anything about the "energy-influences," "conative tendencies," "biological interests," "self-maintenance of system C," "*élan vital*," or whatever we choose to call it or them, so it is useless to discuss this part of the mind-body problem. Although I should prefer the vitalistic method of approach here, probably most of the readers of this JOURNAL would rather think of the primary biological interests as the result of the organization of simpler material elements. In the latter case the emergent theory fits in better than any of the older views. Incidentally I may call attention to the fact that, if one assumes that the biological interests emerge from the organization of material atoms, this apparently behavioristic or materialistic solution of the question does not lead in the direction of an ontological materialistic monism or any kind of monism, first, because, since so much is made of the result of *organization* and *integration*, the organizing or integrating agency is still to be accounted for; second, because no one knows what the first elements are with which the organization begins, electrons being simply our present stopping place; and third, because the whole view is pluralistic. What we have is a hierarchy of entities increasing in "value" with each new integration of the next lower processes. But in these philosophical problems I am not for the moment interested.

*Summarizing*, I believe it is helpful to keep in view that the word "mind" (in its wider meaning) includes three things: first, the primary biological interests: second, adaptive behavior (mind in its narrower meaning): third, consciousness. The classical solutions of the mind-body problem, parallelism, interactionism, double-aspect theory, epiphenomenalism, *etc.*, do not apply to any of these, although we know little about the first. The emergent theory seems better all around.

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## TWO NOTES ON ESTHETICS

THE discussion of esthetics in Vol. XIX, No. 5 of this JOURNAL raised two points which seem to invite further consideration. One is Mr. Pepper's "common-sense concept" for a working unit psychical or subjective side of experience may be the same as what we know indirectly from without as the potential energy of the nerve currents in the brain." (*Monist*, Vol. XVIII, p. 27.) I am myself unable to see why either the emergent theory of Dr. Alexander or the energy theory of Professor Montague needs to be supplemented by introducing any double-aspect view.